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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the use of the interlanguage of a native speaker of Chinese using English. The subject was an art school instructor, and data were drawn from three recordings of language used in his role as teacher. It was found that despite different situations, the nature of the task determined the kind of language-learner language used. The analysis suggests that the subject possesses an English idiolect, his interlanguage, that is a full and complete system with rules and language elements adequate for his present English language needs. The subject's interlanguage shows situational variation demonstrating language variety according to context, a sociolinguistic phenomenon. One aspect of the subject's phonology showing perceptible variation (/l/ to /r/) is examined briefly, and items representing nonstandard usages in a variety of form classes (articles; prepositions; conjugated, two-part, and infinitive verbs; common and proper nouns; pronouns; adjectives; adverbs; modals; and separately, the use of "do") are summarized. A 17-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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In Chinese Way, .../ko+i:uwn/": An analysis of the interlanguage of Yihwen Kuo[1]

Jeanne J. Newman

This paper describes the interlanguage use and variation of Yihwen Kuo, a native speaker of Taiwanese who has been in the United States for almost four years. By using taped samples of his oral English as the data for analysis, three styles of language-learner language are identified for this subject. Sociolinguistic factors which may influence his choice of styles are examined and commented upon.

The findings which are presented in this paper represent an investigation and analysis of the English interlanguage of Yihwen Kuo, who explained the differences between American and Chinese naming practices as follows: "In Chinese way, I should say /ko+i:uwn/. But see, in Western way, you put last name on back. So I spell it Y-I-H-W-E-N., Yihwen and last name K-U-O, Kuo, Yihwen Kuo."

Yihwen Kuo is a native of Taiwan who came to the United States three years and eight months ago (at the time of recording) for the purpose of doing his Master's degree in Fine Arts at the University of Southern Illinois. He is a ceramics instructor at a small art school in Philadelphia and the recorded samples of his language which I had to work with were obtained at three different times but under similar social situations; i.e., during the period of time that he was 'on duty' as an instructor of ceramics. Yihwen possesses an idiolect, his interlanguage, which is a full and complete system with rules and language elements adequate to express his present English language needs.

> According to Wolfson, (1981:1) Language, both as medium and subject of study, is more than a system of sounds, meaning units, and syntax, more than simply a tool for getting meaning across. More than anything else, language is a social behavior, and it is upon this fact that sociolinguistics is predicated. And, ...it would appear that stylistic variation in speech is universal. This being the case, it stands to reason that learners of English will, so far as they are able, vary their speech behavior in an attempt to speak appropriately in the differing speech situations in which they find themselves. (4) and, ...No one speaks the same way all the time. (5).

Hudson, in describing the social nature of speech refers to speech as 'skilled work', "...since it requires effort, and its degree of success depends on the effort that is made." (1980:113-114). Also, the functions which one requires one's speech to

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serve are directly related to the success with which the function (work) is performed, and, "...one of the reasons why some people perform particularly well in some situations is that they have learned very specific skills for use in those situations,...". This aspect of functionalism certainly can apply to Yihwen's use of more complicated grammatical structures during his demonstration, which is an activity that as a ceramics instructor he has performed many many times. He has learned the English required to describe the processes involved in doing a wheel thrown pot.

The term *interlanguage* was first used by Selinker (1972) to discuss "the structured system which the learner constructs at any given stage in his development." This is the same concept called *approximative systems* by Nemser (1971) and *idiosyncratic dialects and transitional competence* by Corder (1971). Nemser (1971) clearly stated three assumptions basic to interlanguage theory which are summarized in Ellis: 1) the interlanguage system of a language learner has clear differences from both the L_1 and L_2; 2) the systems are an evolving series; and 3) there is a close coincidence in the interlanguage systems of learners at the same stage of development.

Judd sees language as "...an aspect of social behavior, with rules which are strongly conditioned by context" (1983:234). Important aspects of context which must be considered when conducting discourse analysis to discover sociolinguistic conditioning factors include: setting; participants, including age and sex and relative social status of those involved; time; presence or absence of audience; and the purpose, or desired goal of the speaker. All of these external circumstances can and do influence speech performance. The significance of my study is that most of these sociolinguisticly variable conditions were held constant for all three taping sessions. The audience varied, but this variable is closely tied to goal, since during the demonstration the hoped-for audience was the entire class which was grouped about Yihwen's potter's wheel. During the other two taped segments, the same people were present for potential audience but he was not necessarily speaking to their ears or for their benefit. I can therefore claim with confidence that the single most important contextual variable which conditioned these three different styles of interlanguage was the goal of the speaker, since the language variation described in this paper was observed under circumstances as identical as feasible. The physical setting was the same (the ceramics studio of the art school), the role of the speaker was the same (as ceramics instructor), the role of the audience was essentially similar (as students in his class) and, his topic was the same (ceramics). Only his

purpose (language goal) varied. In the interview he was supplying me with supplemental personal information and of the three language samples, this one most closely resembles what Labov would call *the vernacular*. In the demonstration, he was describing verbally what his audience could see taking place at the wheel and during his 'advertising blurb' regarding an art show, elements of his language are remarkably like a 'canned speech'. For example, at one point I interrupted him to ask a question, and after answering my question he then backtracked to his previous point and repeated, word-for-word, the utterance which had preceded my interruption!

Hymes describes the language use variability deriving from the users understanding of language appropriate to a particular situation as an integral part of communicative competence (in Ellis, 1971: 77), and the user's knowledge of when, where and with whom to use certain language rules needs to be examined in terms of performative or communicative competence.

Labov (1970) lists five axioms about language use study, two of which are appropriate to this study and are summarized in Ellis: 1) all speakers possess several styles and their speech is adaptive to fit the social context; and 2) styles can range along a single dimension, which Labov measures by amount of attention paid to speech. The important points to consider are, according to Ellis (1986), that variation is systematic, governed by both situational and linguistic factors and that the user's variation can be explained in terms of governing factors which are sociolinguistic and which determine which variants are used where, when and how. The fact that variation is systematic in natural languages is undisputed; however, the claim that interlanguage represents a natural language (an idiolect) is somewhat novel, yet the same types of variability are evident in interlanguages as in natural languages. Yihwen's situational variation, evident by his selection of certain grammatical structures for use in the demonstration that do not occur at all under different situational circumstances, can be compared to Labov's continuum of speech styles ranging from vernacular to careful speech. (see also Tarone, 1983).

The fact that Yihwen's language development can be described using the term *interlanguage* does not detract from the point that his present language system is complete. As a transitional system, Yihwen's interlanguage exhibits situational variation which demonstrates the sociolinguistic phenomenon of 'language variety according to context'. It is probable that Yihwen is capable of producing more varieties of English than I have been able to observe and record, since my association with him is only in his role as instructor. However, since ceramics is his

field, a reasonable assumption is that his language use in this subject represents his most sophisticated register. And, in fact, my findings demonstrate that he uses a level of interlanguage during demonstrations which is marked by a more advanced level of vocabulary, syntax and grammar than is evident in other verbal interactions.

When I examined the transcripts, it became evident that although these language samples were all obtained under similar situations, the goal had affected his production. A different language goal had resulted in different styles of language. The three speech events in which I obtained recorded segments of his language are: Interview, Announcement and Demonstration. It was not immediately obvious that I had obtained three registers which varied according to communicative goal. Yihwen's phonology, which is perhaps the most noticeable element in the language production of a second language learner, does not show perceptible variation from one style to another, but his treatment of /l/ in variation with /r/ is interesting and is included in this study.

In comparing Yihwen's language use in the three taped segments, it is clear that the nature of the task (goal) determines the kind of language-learner language that he uses. There is no question that the style used in the demonstration is a much different style of interlanguage than that used in either the announcement or the interview, and that this can clearly be related to the physical involvement of Yihwen with his clay. This is the sort of situational factor Ellis was referring to; and I would say that physical activity does influence language acquisition, which is fully explored by Asher (1977), who developed his whole theory of Total Physical Response in second language acquisition around just this concept. To summarize some major points: interlanguage is variable with the same speaker demonstrating a range of language styles which move from casual unplanned to formal planned discourse. Learners systematically vary their choice of interlanguage forms according to whether the situation calls for unplanned discourse (the interview) or careful style (the announcement). Intense monitoring is likely to result in the learner using his most advanced interlanguage forms. Thus fewer errors occur in the announcement (canned speech) than in the interview or in the demonstration.

The findings which are presented in this paper represent an investigation and analysis of the English interlanguage of Yihwen Kuo. Yihwen's communicative competence is variable according to the goal of his speech act, and it is this variability in his interlanguage which I have focused on for intensive analysis. The analysis consists of an examination of the subjects use of various parts of speech and

grammatical structures. In Quirk and Greenbaum, varieties of language according to subject matter are referred to as 'register'. "...the use of a specific variety of one class frequently presupposes the use of a specific variety of another" (1973:6). In other words, since Yihwen's demonstration variety includes grammatical elements not present in the other two types, we ought none-the-less to assume that the elements of this variety are available to him for use in other situations. Quirk and Greenbaum list two sets of parts of speech: closed-system items made up of articles, demonstratives, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections, and open-ended items made up of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. It is with these lists of parts of speech that I initiated my analysis of Yihwen's language use.

It appeared at first that there was no pattern or system in the subject's use of the various parts of speech. However, an interesting phonological distinction became immediately clear. As is often the case with native speakers of Chinese, Yihwen has the sounds of /r/ and /l/ as allophones of the same phoneme in most cases, and the following anecdote from one of his classes illustrates the sometimes comic repercussions of this lack of phonological distinction in his English.

Ann, a student in Yihwen's Saturday morning class needed to leave quite early one morning and in explaining her need for speed mentioned that she and her husband were going to New York that afternoon. She then disappeared around the corner into the Glaze room and Yihwen called after her:

Ex. 1 Yihwen: Are you glazing?
/r+yuw+Krezin/

Ann: (not hearing his /n/ ending)
No, we have to go. . . . . Oh!...You mean glazing?

Much laughter followed from all present, as the misunderstanding was instantly apparent to the English speaking observers.

This becomes especially interesting in my analysis because not once does this phonological variation occur in the word clay! This provides the evidence necessary to state that sociolinguistic factors govern his performance. It is important to Yihwen that he produce the sounds of English related to his chosen field with perfection, and although he is probably unaware of the allophonic nature of /l/, /r/ in some other English lexical items, in the word *clay* there is no variety.

I began my analysis of Yihwen's use of the various parts of speech by making several copies of the transcript which I then worked through methodically highlighting all instances of each of the indicated parts of speech. I then isolated

the instances by listing separately each targeted lexical item showing what immediately preceded and followed the item. It was during this stage of my analysis that it became apparent that I had obtained a distinctively different style of language in the demonstration segment. For example, present progressive tense is used extensively in the demonstration segment, but only once in the announcement and only twice in the interview. The two usages in the interview are entirely correct when compared to standard English usage but I believe the occurrences in that context can be attributed to 'chunking'. For example the two examples given below constitute phrasal idioms. However the nine usages within the demonstration segment occur minus the appropriate form of BE, as does the single usage in the announcement.

Ex. 2 the world *is getting* smaller.

Ex. 3 I'm *looking for* teaching job.

This leads me to believe that Yihwen learned the English he needs in order to practice his art, as meaningful chunks (which could be compared to an actor learning lines) and that he is largely unaware of his production in these circumstances. His language proficiency has become more sophisticated as he has spent more time interacting with English speaking students, and this sophistication becomes apparent in his language use since the only instance of his using the present progressive tense with all its necessary elements occurred in the interview which, according to my own classification as well as the relevant literature, represents the least monitored with the least possibility for advance planning of these three speech styles.

This same methodology was used to isolate for examination and analysis the following other items which are included in this study:

Articles: the, a, an
- inappropriate usage
- omission in obligatory context

Prepositions:
- inappropriate item selection
- omission in obligatory context

Verbs: conjugated verb forms, two part verbs and infinitive forms
- inappropriate use
- omission in obligatory context (e.g., part of a two part verb missing)
- tense or part of tense missing

Nouns: common and proper:
- inappropriate use of sing./pl.
- absence of appropriate article or demonstrative

Pronouns:
inappropriate use.
omission in obligatory context
Adjectives:
comparatives
variety of selection
Adverbs: used as intensifiers
Modals including *DO*:

For the sake of brevity I provide here a summary of items reported by negative exception. In other words, I have included only a count of items which represent non-standard usages. It is interesting to note that Yihwen's usage in addition to demonstrating sociolinguistic variability also is an excellent example of language learner language variability as a function of developmental acquisition. None of the errors reported here are 100% consistent throughout his language. Each error is in variation with the appropriate Standard English form to varying degrees, and the Standard English usages outnumber his errors in every instance except his use of the progressive tense minus BE. Since Yihwen used this tense correctly and completely in the interview segment, I feel that it is only a matter of time until he restructures his *demonstration register* to include BE wherever appropriate. Since he has constructed his *demonstration register* to be a verbal accompaniment to his visual work with the wheel, his choice of present progressive is obviously the best possible English structure. An overt act so simple as having his *demonstration register* described and analyzed during the course of this study may be all that is necessary for him to pay close enough attention to his language production that he will overcome this language development plateau. I believe that he learned this functional English at a time previous to his present level of acquisition due to the professional language need he had at that time. The demonstration language has served him well and his major attention is on the wheel throwing process so it may take such conscious attention to his language to correct this use in the *demonstration register*.

Summary of Items by Negative Exception

Articles: The problems exhibited with articles are two fold in that he inserts *a* or *the* where none is required (six instances) or he omits the article in obligatory context (sixteen instances). This misuse is consistent with other studies of Chinese speakers acquiring English as an L_2, and findings generally show that Chinese learners prefer no article which results in a grammatical structure borrowed into their English interlanguage from the L_1.

Prepositions: There is a minor amount of confusion regarding appropriate use of *in*, *on*, or *at* in these transcripts, and a single instance of omission in obligatory context. These infrequent errors do not interfere with his communicating in English with his students.

Verbs - Conjugated: The most noticeable non-standard feature of Yihwen's verb forms is his failure to produce word final stops in contexts which require past tense. It is difficult to determine on the basis of the present data whether this is a phonological deletion of voiced and voiceless stops in word final position which affects his verb forms only, since final stops are present in other places, or if this is a grammatical deficiency, i.e.: he simply hasn't acquired past tense yet.

There are seven instances of a single word final stop where two are called for in past tense in words such as graduate, and there are sixteen instances of present tense being used where the context requires past. These errors occur in a group of frequently used irregular verbs such as BE, HAVE, SEE, GIVE, MAKE, which would seem to support an insufficient learning hypothesis, however there is one clear instance of final stop deletion, also with an irregular verb where the vowel change has taken place, but the word is left unfinished: "...what bra (brought) me here..." A careful phonological study certainly is called for here, as close inspection has revealed that Yihwen deletes the final stop ending under very special conditions. If the word ends in a stop or fricative, plus or minus voice, Yihwen fails to add the stop ending. This analysis of his usage of verb forms also reveals twenty instances of omission of the appropriate form of BE, ten of them in the present progressive tense.

Verbs - Two Part Verbs: Yihwen's two part verbs occur during his demonstration register except for one occurrence during the interview of an idiom chunk (I'm looking for) which reinforces my theory that his demonstration register represents acquisition *chunks* needed for his professional performance in English. His use is entirely Standard English form except for one omission of *to* ,"...you want -- take a look?"

Verbs - Infinitive forms: All instances of non-standard usage involve omission of *to*, and except for one occurrence during the 'Art Show Advertising blurb' are within the *demonstration register* segment.

Nouns - Common: Non-standard usage here consists of the inappropriate use of singular or plural with items like *two month*, or *those clays* (speaking of a lump of clay, not several varieties), and the omission of the appropriate article or demonstrative.

Nouns - Proper: Yihwen's only deviation from totally Standard English usage of proper nouns occurred when he was talking about his studies at Southern Illinois University when he stated "...usually the Master degree, Master Fine Arts is the highest." Standard English would make the phrase possessive: Master's degree. In one other instance he mentions, "I got a Fellowship in the Clay Studio." which Standard English would change to: at Clay Studio, and a few pages later he refers to a Museum as being located: "...in the Penn's Landing" which Standard English usage would change to at Penn's Landing.

Pronouns: There are fourteen instances of inappropriate usage of pronouns, and these instances consist mainly of using plural pronouns where singular are required. In seven instances a pronoun is omitted in obligatory context, and in all seven cases it is the pronoun *it* which is omitted.

Adjectives: a. Comparatives. Yihwen does not exhibit any non-standard use of adjectives. Since he does use the superlative with the forms *highest* and *most*, I will assume he has this form available to him for use if he chooses. Also used appropriately is the form *too much*. b. Variety of selection. His variety of selection is rather small, but I have only taped his 'Ceramics Instructor' code, and I feel certain he has others available to him for other social circumstances. Present in the language samples that I have recorded are cardinal and ordinal numbers, and even though a complete set is not present, they can be assumed to be present because of the ones he uses correctly. The number of other adjectives which he often stacks (e.g. thinner and thinner and thinner) or uses with adverbs (very, very, tiny, tiny foot) seems a quite small list, but he tends to use his few favorites over and over throughout the transcript.

Adverbs: Yihwen uses adverbs to intensify and his list is even smaller than the adjectives which he uses but as with the adjectives, he uses them stacked and repeats the same few with great frequency.

Modals: There is no instance of inappropriate use, but there are six instances of omissions in obligatory context.

DO: *Do* exists in its Standard English form for Yihwen as a full verb, however his use of DO support is not consistent, and represents a variable use rule for which I have to date discovered no conditioning or controlling factor as an explanation. This would seem to qualify his use of DO support as in free variation with its absence in obligatory contexts. According to Gatlionton (1978), free variability can be explained using the diffusion model which allows for incremental acquisition in several steps while the learner sorts out the appropriate form-function relationships.

This description of Yihwen Kuo's interlanguage needs to be tentative indeed not only because of the small size of the language samples but also because of its narrow scope, his Ceramics Instructor code. These samples consist of only 208 language learner utterances with at total of 2,120 individual morphemes. I did an utterance and a morpheme count with the thought that average length of sentence in the three samples might add evidence to my claim for three styles, and while there is an increase in morpheme count per utterance in the demonstration, the difference is not dramatic so I consider it inconclusive. The interview segment has an average sentence length of 9.83 morphemes; the demonstration segment has an average sentence length of 11.91 morphemes; and the announcement segment has an average sentence length of 8.25. The single solid piece of evidence that I have for my claim that his *demonstration register* represents an arrested code for him which is different from his other language use and subject to developmental acquisition is his use of the present progressive. However since this linguistic item's usage is so dramatically tied to the language goal, I cannot help but feel that additional study would yield additional evidence.

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1 The original draft of this paper was written for a class in Second Language Acquisition taught by Dr. Teresa Pica at the University of Pennsylvania.

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